

William Goddard House  
38 Brown Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-195

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
95-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-195

## WILLIAM GODDARD HOUSE

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RI,  
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95-

Address: 38 Brown Street, Providence, Providence County,  
Rhode Island.

Plat 12, Lot 343.

Present Owner: Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island; with  
life tenancy for present occupant.

Present Occupant: Occasionally occupied by Mrs. C. Oliver Iselin.

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This large brick house was the home of two  
William Goddards, both prominent in the activities  
of Brown University. William Giles Goddard, for  
whom with his wife Charlotte Rhoda Ives Goddard  
the house was built, was a professor, trustee,  
secretary and fellow of Brown. His son, William  
Goddard, a Colonel during the Civil War, was a  
trustee and chancellor of Brown. Col. Goddard's  
daughter, the present occupant, deeded the house  
to Brown in 1940 in memory of her father.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1827 Nicholas Brown deeded to Thomas Poynton Ives his  
joint interest in a 3-lot tract of land owned by  
Brown and Ives at the S/W corner of George and  
Brown Streets (Deed Book 56, page 112, in Providence  
City Hall) it was south of the College. Bounded  
N by George Street...150'; E by Brown Street;  
S by Capt Joseph Crawford's strip of land..Harrison  
S Taft Papers..Vol 7 page 60-61...Rhode Island  
Historical Society
- 1837 Hope Brown Ives, Moses Brown Ives, and Robert H  
Ives quit claim to Charlotte Rhoda Goddard, daughter  
of Thomas P Ives [wife of William Giles Goddard]  
and give her a deed to the above lot, where Charlotte  
R Goddard erected her own house...(Deed Book 70A,  
page 197, in Providence City Hall) Taft Papers...  
Vol 7 page 61...Rhode Island Historical Society
- 1876 Charlotte R. Goddard "I give and bequeath to my

dear son William Goddard my Mansion House Estate situated at the corner of George Street and Brown Street, measuring 95' on George and 145.38' on Brown Street"...Wills Book 28, page 260, in Providence City Hall...She died in 1881

1882 Property taxed to William Goddard and in 1913 to Wm Goddard Estate

1936 Property taxed to Hope Goddard Iselin only child of William Goddard

1940 Property taxed to Brown University

2. Date of erection: Between 1827 and 1837, dated c. 1830 by John Hutchins Cady, Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 107, 304.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The original house was considerably enlarged for the second owner, Col. William Goddard, in 1881 before he moved into it following his parents' death. Stone and Carpenter, architects for the 1881 additions and alterations. For a description of the original house see Supplemental Information below, Part I-B. For the present form of the house with the 1881 additions see the description below, Part II.
4. Sources of Information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 107, 304.  
John Hutchins Cady, "The William Goddard House," Rhode Island History, vol. XVII, no. 2 (1958), pp. 48-55.

- B. Supplemental Material: The following is extracted from John Hutchins Cady, "The William Goddard House," Rhode Island History, vol. XVII, no. 2 (1958), pp. 48-55:

". . .The floor plan of the main block originally conformed to such early republican mansions as the John Brown and Thomas Poynton Ives houses. The main entrance was on George Street with two-way steps on the sidewalk. Adjacent to the central hall, facing Brown Street, were two drawing rooms. To the west of the hall were the library on the north and the dining room on the south. The kitchen, pantry, and rear stairs were in a wing, where Mrs. Goddard kept a watchful eye on the culinary department and personally washed her fine Canton china.

"The inside finish followed the traditional motives of the early republican period. The windows were recessed with shutters folding back into splayed jambs. Some of the doorways were capped with carved and moulded cornices and friezes with applied ornaments of Adam design. The furniture, as a rule, was mid-Victorian; in one of the drawing rooms it was made of carved cherry wood, upholstered in red damask."

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
and Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
February 1962

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large elegant brick house, built about 1830, with extensive additions and alterations made in 1881.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Original rectangular main block, about 50' x 40', faced north on George Street. 1881 addition to south end of main block about 50' long with new main entrance facing east on Brown Street. Entire present house three stories high.
2. Foundations: Granite, regular coursed ashlar.
3. Wall construction: Brick, running bond.
4. Porches: 1881 entrance porch set in recess behind original house and later addition. One story, Roman Doric with fluted columns and pilaster responds, full entablature with triglyphs and denticulated cornice, roof balustrade.
5. Chimneys: Brick chimneys in outside walls.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways: Main doorway in entrance porch on east side may be the original doorway moved from the George Street entrance, wide doorway with elliptical toplight, lined with banded Gothic colonettes.

- b. Windows and shutters: Two over two light double hung windows. Marble sills and lintels with incised pattern characteristic of the 1830's. Most of the louvered shutters removed.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape: Low hip roof
- b. Cornice: Molded cornice with cyma reversa crown mold and dentil course.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Original house had central hall plan. New entrance on east opens to large entrance hall, new stairway opposite at right angles to original central hall, wide archway connects new entrance hall with original house on north, original library lengthened to include north end of original central hall, new library and dining room south of entrance hall in new wing. Bedrooms on upper floors with master bedrooms on second floor in later wing.
2. Stairways: U-shape, open string, main stairway to third floor; mahogany rails, newels and twisted balusters, paneled wainscot, copied from Joseph Brown House, 50 South Main Street. Stained glass windows at the landings.
3. Flooring: Wood
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Simple plaster walls and ceilings in original house. Lavishly finished walls and ceilings in later rooms, largely mahogany, elaborate mantels, bookcases, paneling; ceilings are beamed and paneled, some decorated with hammered gold.
5. Doors: Large wood paneled doors, some with carved panels.
6. Trim: Wood trim, paneled interior shutters, original section has typical Federal or Adam-style detail, more elaborate trim in later addition with natural mahogany finish.
7. Hardware: Typical hardware from both periods.
8. Lighting: Electric

9. Heating: Central heat. Fireplaces have very ornate mantels from both periods.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House on medium-sized lot at southwest corner of Brown and George Streets, University neighborhood, house set back from sidewalk with informally planted yards.
2. Enclosures: Iron fence on a low, cut granite base. Iron gates with rusticated granite gate posts.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
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